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ABSTRACT

A change in the focus of the speech communication program at Oklahoma State University (OSU) resulted from recognition during the late 1960s that the only growth potential for the speech communication field was in preparing students for work in nonacademic settings. This paper presents the current status of the program at OSU and discusses the nature of academic coursework for the undergraduate and the graduate (master's degree) major, the practical experience provided students to supplement the academic program, and the assistance provided to students in securing employment upon graduating from the program. Appendixes contain lists of program courses and behavioral objectives for the career-development course, a course outline in career development, selected resources in career planning, and material advertising the OSU speech communication program and its graduates. (JM)

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CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR SPEECH COMMUNICATION MAJORS AT OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

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CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR SPEECH COMMUNICATION MAJORS

AT OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

One of the most important changes which has occurred in the speech communication field during the last two decades is the nature of the work undertaken by graduates of our academic programs. At the beginning of the 1960's we could say with some degree of confidence that most speech communication graduates would secure employment as teachers of speech. Of course, an occasional student would take a job in the business world even though most of his training had been designed to make him a competent speech teacher. Today, however, many programs emphasize preparation for nonacademic careers.

The speech communication program at Oklahoma State University is an example of this change. In 1965 most students in the program were completing a speech education program that served primarily to prepare them to teach speech and drama. Today, less than one-fifth of the speech communication majors at O.S.U. even bother to get a teaching certificate.

This change resulted from a recognition during the late 1960's that the only growth potential for the speech communication field was in preparing students for work in nonacademic settings. Introduction of such a change was facilitated by Oklahoma State's tradition as a land grant institution with a mission of providing practical educational assistance to both agricultural and industrial groups in the state.

This paper will present the current status of the speech communication program at Oklahoma State University with respect to preparing students for nonacademic careers. This summary will focus on the nature of academic coursework for the undergraduate and graduate (M.A.) major,

practical experience provided to supplement the academic program, and assistance provided to students in securing employment upon graduating from the program.

ACADEMIC COURSEWORK

The first area to receive systematic attention in changing the emphasis of the program away from producing speech teachers was the coursework provided to students. The coursework as presently constituted is aimed primarily toward the student preparing to enter a nonacademic career. (Of course, such coursework can be adapted by the student who wants to prepare himself for teaching.) Appendix A provides a summary of most of the courses presently included in the program.

The coursework for undergraduates can be divided into two stages or levels. On the first level courses aim at teaching basic communication skills. Courses at this level include a basic course in interpersonal communication, a course in group discussion, a course in persuasion, and a course in public speaking. Hopefully, when the student completes these courses he will be an effective and sensitive, if not polished, communicator.

The second level of coursework consists of courses in which the student's ability to help others solve communication problems is developed. The specific nature of each of these courses is detailed in Appendix A. Basically these courses (1) provide the student with a background in communication theory that will be useful in defining the nature of a communication problem, (2) develop his observational and analytical skills, (3) provide him with a background in communication problems which may exist in organizational settings, (4) provide him with a background in

societal problems which involve communication, (5) develop his ability to analyze public messages and (6) provide him with experiences in applying theoretical and analytical concepts to "real world" experiences.

Coursework at the master's level consists partially of a more in depth treatment of communication theory, attitude change theory, and organizational theory. In addition, the master's program develops student research skills (data collection and analysis, hypothesis formulation, data interpretation, etc.). One of these courses requires students to develop and conduct a communication audit. A final aspect of the coursework for graduate students is a course that attempts to enhance the student's ability to plan, conduct, and evaluate communication training programs (with emphasis on communication workshops) in a systematic manner.

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCES

A thorough summary of the nature and benefits of internships in speech communication has been provided by Downs, Harper, and Hunt.[1] A brief summary of the practicum program at Oklahoma State University will be presented here. We use the term practicum because (1) the experience usually is only a part (3 hours) of the courseload carried by a student during the semester, (2) the student is evaluated, at least in part, by the manner in which he relates his experience to other coursework, and (3) the student usually is not paid. The term "internship" as used by other departments on the O.S.U. campus implies (1) that the student's work experience will be a full load for the semester, (2) academic credit is given for the work experience itself rather than an evaluation

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[1]Cal W. Downs, Paul Harper, and Gary T. Hunt, "Internships in Speech Communication," Communication Education, XXV (November 1976), in press.

of that experience, and (3) the student will be paid for the work. (Note: Although some students are paid in the O.S.U. practicum program, such pay is given only when the student's expenses for carrying out the practicum seem unreasonable. Such pay is generally channeled through the university in the form of scholarships and stipends.)

The mechanics of carrying out the practicum program are quite simple. The semester before the student does the practicum, he meets with the coordinator of the practicum program. In this meeting the coordinator and the student discuss the student's interests, course background, time schedule for the semester in which the work is to be done, and transportation problems, if any. In addition, suggestions about companies the student would like to work for are taken. The degree of flexibility on the student's part concerning where and when he can work are also ascertained. No guarantees are made to the student at this point.

Following the meeting with the student, the practicum coordinator makes contacts with companies in the area that seem to fit the needs of the student. The nature of the practicum program is described to the company representative. If the company indicates interest in the program, a discussion of the kinds of projects suitable to the student is undertaken. Every effort is made by the practicum coordinator to insure that the practicum projects will be beneficial to the student's later career interests. In general, projects that involve minimal use of communication theory and skills are avoided.

After the practicum positions have been secured, a meeting is arranged at which the practicum coordinator introduces the student to the organization in which he will work. Here again the nature of the student's project is discussed in detail. A follow-up letter is written by the

practicum coordinator after the meeting. This letter stipulates the responsibilities to which the student, the coordinator and the host organization have agreed.

During the practicum semester, the coordinator visits the student while he is on the job at least once to determine how the student is doing as well as to determine the extent to which the experience is meeting the student's expectations.

Following the practicum, the coordinator meets with the host organization to get their reaction to the student's work and arrange any future practicum experiences. He also meets with the student to get his reactions. The student writes an evaluation of his work in which he interrelates his work experience with his academic coursework.

Currently, approximately eight students per semester are being placed in practicum projects. A number of these students do the practicum project during interum periods between semesters. This usually allows for three weeks of concentrated activity. The host organizations feel they profit more and the students accomplish more because they maintain continuity in their work.

The amount of work required from the student in a practicum project varies considerably. However, most students spend from 15 to 30 hours working on their project for each hour of credit they receive. The attitude of the departmental faculty is that the student receives credit, not for the number of hours spent, but for the value of the project in furthering the student's education.

Students in the O.S.U. practicum program have been placed in a wide variety of organizations. These organizations have ranged from large oil companies, an aerospace manufacturing firm, and an airlines company to

governmental organizations such as a guidance center to hospitals and hospital training organizations to small businesses such as a local CPA to educational institutions to large professional organizations. The following list indicates the nature of many of the practicum projects which have been carried out. Students have:

1. conducted attitude surveys and other analytical studies useful in formulating strategies for persuasive campaigns;
2. developed a brochure for a county guidance center advertising services available through the center;
3. developed a package (sample speeches, slides, and a manual on public speaking and using the created materials) for employees of an oil company when making speeches against divestitute;
4. developed an internal communication brochure to explain the functions of an educational communication division;
5. conducted problem-solving sessions for counsellors and administrators in a Department of Corrections pre-release center;
6. developed a slide program with text for use in an employee recruitment program;
7. conducted an ECCO study in a hospital;
8. helped organize a persuasive campaign for a bond election;
9. conducted public speaking workshops for company employees who would represent the company in a wide variety of public appearances;
10. assisted in organizing, programming, and promoting a regional convention of a professional organization;
11. conducted a critical incidence study in a social sorority.
12. assisted in the production of a television film for internal training purposes for an oil company.
13. evaluated a training program for municipal misdemeanant program;
14. assisted in a needs assessment for a continuing education program; and
15. conducted a communication audit of a large bank.

The practicum program at Oklahoma State University is working. The reasons for the success of the program are numerous. Two of these, however,

seem the most important. First, the academic coursework of the department supports the practicum program by providing essential skills, techniques, and theory. Second, the practicum coordinator is given released time (1/4 time) and a sufficient travel budget to fulfill his responsibilities. Without these two factors, it is highly unlikely that any practicum program could succeed over a period of time.

JOB-HUNTING ASSISTANCE

The O.S.U. Speech Department has two programs that attempt to assist the student in finding an appropriate job. One of these programs aims at improving the student's job-hunting skills; the second program promotes awareness of the skills possessed by graduates of the O.S.U. Speech Department on the potential employers.

Every Fall Semester students who plan to complete an undergraduate degree in speech communication during the following calendar year are given an opportunity to enroll in a 2 credit-hour course on job-hunting skills. Behavioral objectives for this course, a course syllabus, and a bibliography for the course are provided in Appendices B, C, and D respectively.

The basic philosophy of the course is that the student is totally responsible for finding his own job. No one else can find a job for him. The probability of finding an appropriate job, however, is extremely high if the student acquires the appropriate job-hunting skills and maintains a sufficient degree of flexibility.

Basically the course first asks students to analyze their own interests and academic preparation and the requirements of various career fields. Following this analysis, students are asked to decide on

a career field. Students are then provided with information on such areas as resume preparation, preparation of letters of inquiry, and preparation for employment interviews. Students are also required to begin looking for a job using a variety of methods. Finally, students are required to develop a detailed job-hunting plan to be implemented after completion of the course.

Course meetings are used primarily for students to share their findings on projects, their problems in preparing for the job hunt, problems they are actually having in looking for jobs, and successes and solutions to problems with each other. Perhaps the most useful outcome of these meetings is the student's realization that others have the same doubts and fears he has and that others are working to overcome or solve their problems.

Our limited experience (two semesters, one just completed) with this course so far indicates that students who complete the course have an extremely high success rate in finding appropriate jobs. Those few students who do not find jobs readily admit the limitations they placed on themselves (limited geographical flexibility, failure to actively pursue employment) were primarily responsible for their lack of success.

Each year the O.S.U. Speech Department sends to roughly 200 potential employers a file folder that advertises both the speech communication program and that year's graduates. Printed on the file folder is a description of the program our students have completed. This description has been included in Appendix E. Inside the file folder are resumes of all students completing either the bachelor's or master's degree.

The success of this program is difficult to evaluate. We do know, however, that four students received interviews for jobs based exclusively on the resumes sent out in this way.

As we work with students who are nearing completion of the academic program, a major problem seems to be a lack of information about the world of work on the part of these students. This lack of information leads to late decisions about the student's own career. We currently envision developing a program to provide necessary information to our students at an earlier date. Basically, this program would consist of a monthly convocation of all speech communication majors. Speakers invited for these convocations will fall into three basic categories:

A. Former graduates who will be able to describe their job.

B. Recruiters, managers, etc., from various kinds of organizations who would describe jobs for which they would hire speech communication majors.

C. University personnel who are acquainted with the career development process and can provide insights about career selection.

The career development program for speech communication majors which was begun about ten years ago has made rapid progress during the past three years. It has enjoyed considerable success in working with a relatively small number of students (roughly 10-12 graduates per year during the last three years). We hope and believe that the number of graduates per year can be doubled during the next five years.

Appendix A

O.S.U. Courses Supporting Career Development Program

I. Skill-Development Courses

SPCH 3793 - Processes of Speech Communication.

This course seeks to improve the student's proficiency and sensitivity in one-to-one communication. Both conversational and more structured interview situations are dealt with.

SPCH 3703 - Group Discussion

This course seeks to improve both participation and leadership skills in small group situations. Group projects as well as case studies are utilized.

SPCH 3733 - Persuasion

This course provides information on strategies appropriate for conducting persuasive campaigns. A significant part of the course is devoted to a project which requires each student to conduct a campaign.

SPCH 3743 - Advanced Public Speaking

This course seeks to improve the student's ability to construct and deliver a public speech.

II. Theory-Analytical Courses

SPCH 4703 - Models of Speech Communication

This course provides the student with a variety of ways of conceptualizing the process of communication. Emphasis is placed on developing models appropriate for specific situations and problems.

SPCH 4743 - Problems of Interpersonal Communication

This course provides the student with concepts and tools useful in analyzing communication problems. Emphasis is placed on developing sound interventionist strategies in helping others solve their communication problems.

SPCH 4753 - Current Oral Communication Problems

This course analyzes typical communication problems existing in today's society. Strategies for dealing with such problems as alienation, cross cultural communication, and mistrust of societal institutions are dealt with.

SPCH 4763 - Organizational Communication

This course analyzes the nature and function of communication in the organization. Typical problems of organizational communication and strategies for detecting and dealing with those problems are dealt with.

SPCH 4793 - Nonverbal Communication

The impact of nonverbal behavior on human communication is analyzed. The usefulness of nonverbal behavior in detecting and analyzing communication problems is demonstrated.

SPCH 4723 - History of Public Address

Historical speakers and speeches are studied in an attempt to determine useful techniques and strategies in the construction of messages and the delivery of public speeches.

Appendix B

Behavioral Objectives for Course - Career Development

1. Students will be able to describe the career decision-making and job-hunting process.
2. Students will describe the typical duties, responsibilities and working conditions of at least one career field in which they are interested by the third week of the semester.
3. Students will construct a personal inventory which summarizes their education, work experiences, abilities, etc. by the end of the fourth week of the semester.
4. Students will select the career field in which their primary interest lies by the end of the fourth week of the semester.
5. Students will construct a rough draft of their resume by the end of the fifth week of the semester and a final draft by the end of the sixth week of the semester.
6. Students will construct a rough draft of a sample letter of inquiry or application by the end of the sixth week of the semester and a final draft by the end of the seventh week of the semester.
7. Students will identify at least four ways of finding out about job vacancies in their primary area of interest by the end of the eighth week of the semester.
8. Students will participate as an interviewee in a role-playing employment interview for a job in the career field they are most interested in by the end of the tenth week of the semester.
9. Students will locate, secure, participate in, and evaluate their performance in at least two employment interviews by the end of the thirteenth week of the semester.

10. Students will construct a detailed job-hunting plan that they intend to implement during the following semester by the end of the fifteenth week of the semester.

Appendix C

SPEECH 3010

CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR COMMUNICATION CONSULTANCY MAJORS

Fall, 1976

This course is designed to take you through the career decision-making and job-hunting process. It has been my experience that students who decide early what type of job they want and conscientiously pursue a job-hunting plan secure a job in line with their interests and abilities. This course will not only provide you with an opportunity to do these things but will also provide some motivation for getting them done on schedule.

Textbook

William N. Yeomans. Jobs '76. A Berkley Winhover Book. 1976.

Projects

This course will consist of six projects and informal class discussion centered around these projects. All projects will be of equal weight in determining your grade. Deadline dates for each project will be announced so that you will have plenty of time to complete each project on time. Deadlines should be strictly observed.

Project # 1

You will be assigned a career field to study. Based on research in printed sources as well as interviews, you should write a 3-4 page paper. Your paper should realistically describe the typical duties, responsibilities and working conditions of the career field. If there is more than one kind of job in the career field, the possibilities within the field should be explained and examined. Other information relevant to the career field also should be included. You should attach a bibliography of the sources you consulted in preparing your paper. You will also orally present the information contained in your paper to the rest of the class.

Project # 2

This project has five parts. All of them must be completed satisfactorily to receive credit for the project.

The first part of the project is to create a personal inventory which summarizes your education, work experience, abilities, etc. This 2-3 page inventory should end with a paragraph in which you state the one or two career fields in which you are most interested.

Part two of the project requires you to submit a final draft of your resume. A date will be announced for these so they can be duplicated by the Placement Office. You are also required to provide the Department of Speech with 200 copies of your resume. These will be placed in a booklet that will be sent to companies in and around Oklahoma.

Part three of the project requires you to construct and hand in a sample letter of inquiry or application. This should be in final, complete, neat form.

Part four of the project requires you to participate as an interviewee in a mock employment interview for a job in the career field you are most interested in.

Part five of the project requires you to register with the OSU Placement Office.

Project # 3

For this project you are to write a 2-4 page paper in which you identify at least four ways of finding out about job vacancies in your primary area of interest. For each way of finding openings you should describe one vacancy you found using the method. In an informal class discussion you should orally share the information you gained with the rest of the class.

Project # 4

For this project you must locate, secure, participate in, and evaluate your performance in at least two employment interviews (either on-campus or off-campus). Your evaluation should be written and handed in. You should also be prepared to discuss your experiences orally with the rest of the class.

Project # 5

This project requires you to prepare a detailed job-hunting plan that you intend to implement during the Spring Semester. Specifically, whom do you plan to contact? When? What sources of information will you monitor periodically? What kinds of follow-up do you plan to use?

Project # 6

This project will not necessarily be done last. It requires that you read one assigned book, write a 2-3 page summary of the book, and make an oral book report to the rest of the class. Dates for the oral book reports will be assigned throughout the semester.

Attendance Policy

You are expected to be present for every meeting of the class. Much of the value of the class will be in the information you gain from other students. Failure to attend will result in grade penalty.

Grades

Each project will be graded using the traditional A,B,C,D,F system. The average of grades received minus penalties for failure to attend will be your final grade. Do not assume that everyone will get an A or B. You will receive the grade you earn!

Appendix D

Selected Sources in Career Planning

Bolles, Richard Nelson. Practical Manual for Job-Hunters & Career Changers. 1973.

Brenner, Barbara. Careers and Opportunities in Fashion. 1964.

Calvert, Robert Jr. Planning Your Career. 1963.

Casewit, Curtis. How to Get a Job Overseas. 1970.

College Placement Council. College Placement Annual. 1977.

Evans, Gordon H. Managerial Job Descriptions in Manufacturing. 1964.

Irish, Richard K. Go Hire Yourself an Employer. 1973.

King, Alice Gore. Career Opportunities for Women in Business. 1963.

Lewis, Adelle. From College to Careers. 1963.

Magorin, F. Alexander. Successfully Finding Yourself and Your Job. 1959.

Moore, Mary Furlong. Career Guide for Young People. 1963.

Peterson, Clarence E. Careers for College Graduates. 1968.

Place, Irene and Alice Armstrong. Management Careers for Women. 1975.

Smith, Leonard J. Career Planning. 1959.

Splaver, Sarah. Careers in Personnel Administration. 1962.

United States Civil Service Commission. Federal Career Directory, 1976-77.

United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Occupational Outlook Handbook. 1976-77 edition.

Appendix E

Copy for File Folder Advertising OSU Speech Communication Program

and Its Graduates

The students and faculty from the Department of Speech at Oklahoma State University would like for you to become better acquainted with us. Our communication consultancy program prepares professionals to work in a variety of people-oriented jobs in business, industrial, governmental, public service, educational, and community organizations. This file summarizes the nature of the training graduates of the Communication-Consultancy Program have received and presents this year's graduates of our program. If you feel any of your colleagues might be interested in one or more of our graduates, please feel free to circulate any of the enclosed resumes.

THE NEED FOR SKILLED COMMUNICATORS. The OSU Speech Communication Consultancy Program was initiated as a response to the need for skilled communicators and problem-solvers stressed by leaders of the business community. As a leading management consultant, Peter F. Drucker, has stated: "As soon as you move one step up from the bottom, your effectiveness depends on your ability to reach others through the spoken or written word." A recent study in Pennsylvania found that top management regarded "communication in the organization" as their most vital educational need. Management identified the following competencies among the most important for success:

*Effective Speaking
*Working Efficiently with Individuals and Groups
*Effective Communication in the Organization
*Listening Skills

A survey of personnel and marketing managers in New York and Hawaii asked the managers to rank the most important skills needed by administrative personnel. The four skills ranked highest by these managers were as follows:

*Communicate.
*Work with and use skills of others, motivate.
*Plan, develop, organize and coordinate.
*Analyze data, propose solutions and make decisions.

These are the skills developed by the Communication Consultancy Program.

SKILLS POSSESSED BY COMMUNICATION CONSULTANCY GRADUATES. Students who have completed the undergraduate program in Communication Consultancy have acquired a wide range of skills in dealing with people and solving problems. They have had an opportunity to practice their skills in an on-the-job experience with a business, industrial, governmental, or community organization. Some of the specific skills they possess are:

*Planning and conducting interviews of all types.
*Constructing and implementing persuasive campaigns.
*Gathering information from others.
*Working with others in decision-making and problem-solving groups.
*Constructing and presenting public speeches.
*Creating and implementing instructional programs in communication in on-the-job settings.

Students who have completed the MASTER'S program in communication consultancy not only possess the skills listed above but also are capable of analyzing and summarizing statistical

research data as well as carrying out research projects of their own. Students with a master's degree also have considerable experience in designing and executing high-quality communication training programs.

In addition to the skills mentioned above many of the graduates listed in the resumes that follow, have taken considerable course work in such areas as management, marketing, business law, advertising and public relations, radio and television broadcasting, psychology, and sociology.

JOBS FOR WHICH YOU SHOULD CONSIDER OUR GRADUATES. Perhaps the best way we have of suggesting specific positions for which you might consider one or more of our graduates is to list some of the positions which have been filled by our graduates during the past four or five years. Positions taken by our graduates include:

*Sales Representative (for companies in a variety of industries such as the paper, computer, detergent, and insurance industries)
*Employee Training
*Sales Management Training
*Advertising and Public Relations
*Retail Sales
*Customer Relations
*Employee Selection and Recruitment
*Management Trainee
*Bank Teller
*Political Campaign Organizer

Of course, this list is merely suggestive. You may have a number of positions not on this list which place heavy emphasis on the ability to communicate with others.

A FINAL WORD ABOUT OUR GRADUATES. We are proud to present to you this year's graduates of the Communication Consultancy Program. Many of them have not only distinguished themselves in their academic work but have also taken leadership roles in a variety of campus and community organizations and projects. We believe that the students in our program are some of the finest students at Oklahoma State University. We confidently expect that they will be successful in the careers they choose. If you would like more specific information about any of the graduates listed in the resumes which follow, please feel free to call any of the members of our faculty listed below at (405) 624-6150.

Fred Tewell, Chairman of Speech Department Faculty
Arlee Johnson, Academic Advisor to Communication Consultancy Students
Paul Harper, Supervisor of Communication Consultancy Practicums